ABBA® The Visitors

ABBA The Visitors

The Visitors was first released in Sweden as Polar POLS 342 on November 30, 1981. Recording sessions began in March 1981 and continued until November 1981. The album was recorded at Polar Music Studios in Stockholm, Sweden.

With Dick Cavett on the television show Dick Cavett Meets ABBA, April 1981.

The journey towards the end

Liner notes by Carl Magnus Palm

The Visitors, released at the end of November 1981, was ABBA's eighth and final studio album. For the group it had been a complicated LP to put together: they were nearing the end of the ABBA story.

The year of 1981 had started with a bit of sad news. Two years after Björn and Agnetha announced their divorce, Benny and Frida issued a statement that they had also decided to go their separate ways. The world raised its eyebrows at the continued decision on part of all four members to continue recording as ABBA. But however strange it may seem, they still enjoyed working together in the studio. It was a different kind of relationship between the four now – Björn had remarried in January, and Benny would also tie the knot with a new wife before the year was over – but the Andersson/Ulvaeus songwriting partnership was as solid as ever, and certainly, Agnetha and Frida still knew how to sing. None of the four could see a reason to put a stop to ABBA. The group's lyrics had become increasingly personal over the past few years, and perhaps no more so than on the first batch of songs written for the new album. *When All Is Said And Done*, recorded in March, featured an emotional lead vocal from Frida. The words detailed the feelings of a couple splitting up – Björn later admitted that Benny and Frida's divorce had coloured much of the lyrics he wrote for the song.

In *Slipping Through My Fingers,* recorded around the same time, Björn was writing more specifically about his own life. The idea for the lyrics came from watching his daughter Linda going away to school – she had started her first year in the Autumn of 1980. The experience put Björn in a pensive mood, and he started reflecting on where all the time had passed since Linda's birth. Those thoughts transformed into the lyrics for *Slipping Through My Fingers*, naturally performed by Linda's mother Agnetha.

The third title in this group of new recordings, *Two For The Price Of One*, was a more lightweight number, featuring Björn

ABBA at Polar Music Studios during the making of The Visitors.

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himself on lead vocals. The lyrics were a somewhat bizarre story about a man answering an ad in the personal columns.

After this first session period, ABBA took a break from recording and taped a television special entitled *Dick Cavett Meets ABBA*. As the title indicates, part of the special consisted of an interview with four members, conducted by the famous American talk show host Dick Cavett. The second half of the programme was then devoted to a live concert, taped in front of a television studio audience. Aside from a string of hits from the past, ABBA performed both *Slipping Through My Fingers* and *Two For The Price Of One* during this concert.

A few abortive album sessions followed in May, and it wasn't until September that ABBA were back on track with the album again. Among the songs recorded in the Autumn was *I Let The Music Speak*. With its theatrical mood and shifting sections, it was a song that pointed towards an ambition that Björn and Benny had harboured for several years: to write a musical. Later in 1981, they would have their first meeting with lyricist Tim Rice to discuss such a project. Three years later the trio released the concept album for their musical *Chess*.

Also recorded during the Autumn sessions was the first single from the album, *One Of Us*. This Agnetha-led track again detailed the effects of splitting up from a partner. In the eyes and ears of the record-buying public it was hard not to conclude that the group members were singing about themselves. *One Of Us* turned out to be ABBA's last major worldwide hit.

The flipside of the single, *Should I Laugh Or Cry*, featured Frida on lead vocals. It was one of the stronger of ABBA's single B-sides, and over the years it has become something of a cult favourite among the group's most devoted fans. *Should I Laugh Or Cry* is featured as a bonus selection on this CD.

"In August 1982, ABBA began their very last recordings"

***The Visitors* showed** that ABBA were evolving into a more mature group. For instance, the lyrics to the atmospheric title track dealt with the dangerous situation for dissidents in the Soviet Union at the time.

Like ABBA's albums usually did, *The Visitors* stormed up the charts most everywhere. It was a number one LP in Great Britain, Sweden, The Netherlands and West Germany, to name but a few countries. Meanwhile, the ABBA members themselves took an extended break from the group. In January 1982, Björn and Benny both became fathers again, and Frida spent a few months recording her first solo album in seven years, *Something's Going*

Performing live on the television show Dick Cavett Meets ABBA.

On, produced by Phil Collins. In May the group was back together in the studio again, recording tracks for their next album. But the sessions were not going well. ABBA had begun running out of energy and motivation, not least because Björn and Benny's thoughts were starting to drift towards their prospective musical project with Tim Rice.

The group decided to postpone their album plans. Instead, they would release a compilation double album of their most popular singles from 1973 to 1982. For this purpose they would also record a couple of new tracks that could be released as singles. The songs would also be included on the compilation package, *The Singles – The First Ten Years*.

In August 1982, ABBA began what turned out to be their very last recording sessions. When they were over, they had produced three new tracks. The first single from these sessions was *The Day Before You Came* backed with *Cassandra*. Both tracks have been included as bonus tracks on this CD.

The Day Before You Came was the last ABBA track to be recorded, and was arguably one of their finest accomplishments. However, when it was released as a single in October 1982, it met with widely opposing fates. In several European countries it was a convincing Top 5 hit. But in Great Britain, the place that Björn and Benny always regarded as the home of successful, finger-on-the-pulse pop music, the song only peaked just outside the Top 30. The next single was *Under Attack*, which is featured as a bonus selection on this CD. *Under Attack* was ABBA's latest release as an active group, but like *The Day Before You Came*, it didn't fare very well on the charts. It was as if everything was falling into place: ABBA were tired of being ABBA, and the record-buying public had started looking elsewhere for new sounds, new styles and new faces.

The group decided to take a break. Björn and Benny would write their musical together with Tim Rice, and in the meantime Agnetha and Frida would make solo albums. But the break turned out to be permanent. After the *Chess* musical had been released on record, and then staged in London in the Spring of 1986, all motivation to continue with ABBA had disappeared.

The general public seemed to forget about ABBA for a few years, but in the early 1990s things started stirring again. The compilation album *ABBA Gold*, which has sold more than 20 million copies worldwide at the time of writing, was released in 1992, kickstarting a revival that has since refused to die down.

While Frida and Agnetha have chosen to keep a lower profile as artists for most of this time, Björn and Benny took charge of the ABBA legacy again at the end of the 1990s. With the staging of the successful musical *Mamma Mia!*, based on ABBA songs, they have found a way to let the group's music live on well into the new millennium. ■

The picture that adorned the single sleeve for The Day Before You Came.

01 The Visitors (Crackin' Up)

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

I hear the doorbell ring,
and suddenly the panic takes me
The sound so ominously tearing through the silence
I cannot move, I'm standing
Numb and frozen
Among the things I love so dearly
The books, the paintings and the furniture
Help me
The signal's sounding once again,
and someone tries the doorknob
None of my friends would be so stupidly impatient
And they don't dare to come here
Anymore now
But how I loved our secret meetings
We talked and talked in quiet voices
Smiling
Now I hear them moving
Muffled noises coming through the door
I feel I'm
Crackin' up
Voices growing louder, irritation building
And I'm close to fainting
Crackin' up
They must know by now I'm in here trembling
In a terror evergrowing
Crackin' up
My whole world is falling, going crazy
There is no escaping now, I'm
Crackin' up
These walls have witnessed,
all the anguish of humiliation
And seen the hope of freedom glow in shining faces
And now they've come to take me
Come to break me
And yet it isn't unexpected
I have been waiting for these visitors
Help me
Now I hear them moving
Muffled noises coming through the door
I feel I'm
Crackin' up
Voices growing louder, irritation building
And I'm close to fainting
Crackin' up
They must know by now I'm in here trembling
In a terror evergrowing
Crackin' up
My whole world is falling, going crazy
There is no escaping now, I'm
Crackin' up
Now I hear them moving
Muffled noises coming through the door
I feel I'm
Crackin' up
Voices growing louder, irritation building
And I'm close to fainting
Crackin' up
(I have been waiting for these visitors)
They must know by now I'm in here trembling
In a terror evergrowing
Crackin' up
(I have been waiting for these visitors)
My whole world is falling, going crazy
There is no escaping now, I'm
Crackin' up
(I have been waiting for these visitors)
Now I hear them moving
Muffled noises coming through the door
I feel I'm
Crackin' up
(I have been waiting for these visitors)
Voices growing louder, irritation building
And I'm close to fainting
Crackin' up
(I have been waiting for these visitors)
They must know by now I'm in here trembling
In a terror evergrowing
Crackin' up
(I have been waiting for these visitors)
My whole world is falling, going crazy
There is no escaping now, I'm
Crackin' up

02 Head Over Heals

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

I have a very good friend
The kind of girl who likes to follow a trend
She has a personal style
Some people like it, others tend to go wild
You hear her voice everywhere
Taking the chair
She's a leading lady
And with no trace of hesitation she keeps going

ABBA in 1981.

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Head over heels
Breaking her way
Pushing through unknown jungles every day
She's a girl with a taste for the world
(The world is like a playing-ground,
where she goes rushing)
Head over heels
Setting the pace
Running the gauntlet in a whirl of lace
She's extreme, if you know what I mean
Her man is one I admire
He's so courageous but he's constantly tired
Each time when he speaks his mind
She pats his head and says, "That's all very fine"
Exert that will of your own
When you're alone
Now we'd better hurry
And with no trace of hesitation she keeps going
Head over heels
Breaking her way
Pushing through unknown jungles every day
She's a girl with a taste for the world
(The world is like a playing-ground,
where she goes rushing)
Head over heels
Setting the pace
Running the gauntlet in a whirl of lace
She's extreme, if you know what I mean
You hear her voice everywhere
Taking the chair
She's a leading lady
And with no trace of hesitation she keeps going
Head over heels
Breaking her way
Pushing through unknown jungles every day
She's a girl with a taste for the world
(The world is like a playing-ground,
where she goes rushing)
Head over heels
Setting the pace
Running the gauntlet in a whirl of lace
She's extreme, if you know what I mean
(She's just one of those,
Who always likes to do whatever she please)
And she goes
Head over heels

03 When All Is Said And Done

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

Here's to us one more toast and then we'll pay the bill
Deep inside both of us can feel the autumn chill
Birds of passage, you and me
We fly instinctively
When the summer's over,
and the dark clouds hide the sun
Neither you nor I'm to blame when all is said and done
In our lives we have walked,
some strange and lonely treks
Slightly worn but dignified and not too old for sex
We're still striving for the sky
No taste for humble pie
Thanks for all your generous love,
and thanks for all the fun
Neither you nor I'm to blame when all is said and done
It's so strange when you're down and lying on the floor
How you rise, shake your head,
get up and ask for more
Clear-headed and open-eyed
With nothing left untried
Standing calmly at the crossroads, no desire to run
There's no hurry any more when all is said and done
Standing calmly at the crossroads, no desire to run
There's no hurry any more when all is said and done

04 Soldiers

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

Do I hear what I think I'm hearing
Do I see the signs I think I see
Or is this just fantasy
Is it true that the beast is waking
Stirring in his restless sleep tonight,
in the pale moonlight
In the grip of this cold December,
you and I have reason to remember
Soldiers write the songs that soldiers sing
The songs that you and I don't sing
They blow their horns and march along
They drum their drums and look so strong
You'd think that nothing in the world was wrong
Soldiers write the songs that soldiers sing
The songs that you and I won't sing
Let's not look the other way
Taking a chance
'cause if the bugler starts to play
We too must dance

Previous spread: ABBA rehearsing their performance on the West German television programme Show Express, November 1982.

What's that sound, what's that dreadful rumble
Won't somebody tell me what I hear
In the distance but drawing near
Is it only a storm approaching
All that thunder and the blinding light in the winter night
In the grip of this cold December
You and I have reason to remember
Soldiers write the songs that soldiers sing
The songs that you and I don't sing
They blow their horns and march along
They drum their drums and look so strong
You'd think that nothing in the world was wrong
Soldiers write the songs that soldiers sing
The songs that you and I won't sing
Let's not look the other way
Taking a chance
'cause if the bugler starts to play
We too must dance

05 I Let The Music Speak

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

I'm hearing images, I'm seeing songs
No poet has ever painted
Voices call out to me, straight to my heart
So strange yet we're so well acquainted
I let the music speak, with no restraints
I let my feelings take over
Carry my soul away into the world
Where beauty meets the darkness of the day
Where my mind is like an open window
Where the high and healing winds blow
From my shallow sleep the sounds awake me
I let them take me
(Let them wake me, let them now, let them take me)
Let it be a joke
Let it be a smile
Let it be a farce if it makes me laugh for a little while
Let it be a tear
Let it be a sigh
Coming from a heart,
Speaking to a heart, let it be a cry
Some streets are emptiness, dry leaves of Autumn
Rustling down an old alley
And in the dead of night I find myself
A blind man in some ancient valley
I let the music speak, leading me gently
Urging me like a lover
Leading me all the way
Into a place
Where beauty will defeat the darkest day
Where I'm one with every grand illusion
No disturbance, no intrusion
Where I let the wistful sounds seduce me
I let them use me
(All illusion, no disturbance, no intrusion)
Let it be a joke
Let it be a smile
Let it be a farce if it makes me laugh for a little while
Let it be a tear
Let it be a sigh
Coming from a heart,
Speaking to a heart, let it be a cry
Let it be a tear
Let it be a sigh
Coming from a heart,
Speaking to a heart, let it be a cry
Let it be the joy of each new sunrise
Or the moment when a day dies
I surrender without reservation
No explanations
No questions why
I take it to me and let it flow through me
Yes, I let the music speak
I let the music speak

06 One Of Us

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

They passed me by, all of those great romances
You were, I felt, robbing me of my rightful chances
My picture clear, everything seemed so easy
And so I dealt you the blow
One of us had to go
Now it's different, I want you to know
One of us is crying
One of us is lying
In her lonely bed
Staring at the ceiling
Wishing she was somewhere else instead
One of us is lonely
One of us is only
Waiting for a call
Sorry for herself, feeling stupid feeling small
Wishing she had never left at all
I saw myself as a concealed attraction
I felt you kept me away from the heat and the action

Just like a child, stubborn and misconceiving
That's how I started the show
One of us had to go
Now I've changed and I want you to know
One of us is crying
One of us is lying
In her lonely bed
Staring at the ceiling
Wishing she was somewhere else instead
One of us is lonely
One of us is only
Waiting for a call
Sorry for herself, feeling stupid feeling small
Wishing she had never left at all
Never left at all
Staring at the ceiling
Wishing she was somewhere else instead
One of us is lonely
One of us is only
Waiting for a call

07 Two For The Price Of One

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

He had what you might call a trivial occupation
He cleaned the platforms of the local railway station
With no romance in his life –
Sometimes he wished he had a wife
He read the matrimonial advertising pages
The cries for help from different people, different ages
But they had nothing to say, at least not until the day,
When something special he read, this is what it said
If you dream, of the girl for you, then call us and get
Two for the price of one
We're the answer, if you feel blue, so call us and get
Two for the price of one
He called the number and a voice said "Alice Whiting"
The voice was husky and it sounded quite exciting
He was amazed at his luck,
the purest streak of gold he'd struck
He said, I read your ad, it sounded rather thrilling
I think a meeting could be mutually fulfilling
Why don't we meet for a chat, the three of us in my flat
I can't forget what I read
This is what it said
If you dream, of the girl for you, then call us and get
Two for the price of one
We're the answer, if you feel blue, so call us and get
Two for the price of one
She said I'm sure we must be perfect for each other
And if you doubt it you'll be certain,
When you meet my mother

08 Slipping Through My Fingers

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

Schoolbag in hand
She leaves home
In the early morning
Waving goodbye
With an absent-minded smile
I watch her go
With a surge of
That well known sadness
And I have to sit down
For a while
The feeling that I'm
Loosing her forever
And without really
Entering her world
I'm glad whenever I
Can share her laughter
That funny little girl
Slipping through my fingers
All the time
I try to capture
Every minute
The feeling in it
Slipping through my fingers
All the time
Do I really see what's in
In her mind
Each time I think
I'm close to knowing
She keeps on growing
Slipping through my fingers
All the time
Sleep in our eyes
Her and me
At the breakfast table
Barely awake I
Let precious time go by
Then when she's gone
There's that odd
Melancholy feeling
And a a sense of
Guilt I can't deny

Björn and Benny in the studio, Spring 1981.

What happened to the
Wonderful adventures
The places I had
Planned for us to go
Well some of that we did
But most we didn't
And why I just don't know
Slipping through my fingers...
Sometimes I wish
That I could freeze
The picture
And save it from
The funny tricks of time
Slipping through my fingers
Schoolbag in hand
She leaves home
In the early morning
Waving goodbye
With an absent-minded smile

09 Like An Angel Passing Through My Room

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

Long awaited darkness falls
Casting shadows on the walls
In the twilight hour I am alone
Sitting near the fireplace, dying embers warm my face
In this peaceful solitude
All the outside world subdued
Everything comes back to me again
In the gloom
Like an angel passing through my room
Half awake and half in dreams
Seeing long forgotten scenes
So the present runs into the past
Now and then become entwined,
playing games within my mind
Like the embers as they die
Love was one prolonged good-bye
And it all comes back to me tonight
In the gloom
Like an angel passing through my room
I close my eyes
And my twilight images go by
All too soon
Like an angel passing through my room

10 Should I Laugh Or Cry

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

He stands towering over me beside my bed
Losing his head
Tells me I must take him seriously
Droning on the usual way
He's such a clever guy
And I wonder should I laugh or cry
He's (he's) dressed (dressed),
In the striped pajamas that I bought
Trousers too short
Gives (gives) me (me) all his small philosophy
Carries on the way he does
And me I get so tired
And I wonder should I laugh or cry

Posing for the camera during the making of the When All is Said And Done video.

High and mighty his banner flies
A fool's pride in his eyes
Standing there on his toes to grow in size
(All I see is)
All I see is a big balloon
Halfway up to the moon
He's wrapped up in a warm and safe cocoon
Of an eternal lie
So should I laugh or cry
Strange (strange) how (how),
Dangerously indifferent I have grown
Cold as a stone
No (no) more (more) pain where there was pain before
Far away he rambles on, I feel my throat go dry
And I wonder should I laugh or cry
High and mighty his banner flies
A fool's pride in his eyes
Standing there on his toes to grow in size
(All I see is)
All I see is a big balloon
Halfway up to the moon
He's wrapped up in a warm and safe cocoon
Of an eternal lie
So should I laugh or cry

11 The Day Before You Came

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

I must have left my house at eight,
Because I always do
My train, I'm certain,
Left the station just when it was due
I must have read the morning paper going into town
And having gotten through the editorial,
No doubt I must have frowned
I must have made my desk around a quarter after nine
With letters to be read,
And heaps of papers waiting to be signed
I must have gone to lunch at half past twelve or so
The usual place, the usual bunch
And still on top of this,
I'm pretty sure it must have rained
The day before you came
I must have lit my seventh cigarette at half past two
And at the time I never even noticed I was blue
I must have kept on dragging,
Through the business of the day
Without really knowing anything, I hid a part of me away
At five I must have left,
There's no exception to the rule
A matter of routine,
I've done it ever since I finished school
The train back home again
Undoubtedly I must have read the evening paper then
Oh yes, I'm sure my life was well within its usual frame
The day before you came
I must have opened my front door at eight o'clock or so
And stopped along the way,
To buy some Chinese food to go
I'm sure I had my dinner watching something on TV
There's not, I think,
A single episode of Dallas that I didn't see
I must have gone to bed around a quarter after ten
I need a lot of sleep, and so I like to be in bed by then
I must have read a while
The latest one by Marilyn French,
Or something in that style
It's funny, but I had no sense of living without aim
The day before you came
And turning out the light I must have yawned,
And cuddled up for yet another night
And rattling on the roof,
I must have heard the sound of rain
The day before you came

12 Cassandra

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

Down in the street they're all singing and shouting
Staying alive though the city is dead
Hiding their shame behind hollow laughter
While you are crying alone on your bed
Pity Cassandra that no one believed you
But then again you were lost from the start
Now we must suffer and sell our secrets
Bargain, playing smart, aching in our hearts
Sorry Cassandra I misunderstood
Now the last day is dawning
Some of us wanted but none of us could
Listen to words of warning
But on the darkest of nights
Nobody knew how to fight
And we were caught in our sleep
Sorry Cassandra I didn't believe
You really had the power
I only saw it as dreams you would weave
Until the final hour

So in the morning your ship will be sailing
Now that your father and sister are gone
There is no reason for you to linger
You're grieving deeply but still moving on
You know the future is casting a shadow
No one else sees it but you know your fate
Packing your bags, being slow and thorough
Knowing, though you're late, that ship is sure to wait
Sorry Cassandra I misunderstood
Now the last day is dawning
Some of us wanted but none of us could
Listen to words of warning
But on the darkest of nights
Nobody knew how to fight
And we were caught in our sleep
Sorry Cassandra I didn't believe
You really had the power
I only saw it as dreams you would weave
Until the final hour
I watched the ship leaving harbour at sunrise
Sails almost slack in the cool morning rain
She stood on deck, just a tiny figure
Rigid and restrained, blue eyes filled with pain
Sorry Cassandra I misunderstood
Now the last day is dawning
Some of us wanted but none of us could
Listen to words of warning
But on the darkest of nights
Nobody knew how to fight
And we were caught in our sleep
Sorry Cassandra I didn't believe
You really had the power
I only saw it as dreams you would weave
Until the final hour
I'm sorry Cassandra
I'm sorry Cassandra

13 Under Attack

(B. Andersson/B. Ulvaeus)
Universal/Union Songs AB

Don't know how to take it, don't know where to go
My resistance running low
And every day the hold is getting tighter,
And it troubles me so
(You know that I'm nobody's fool)
I'm nobody's fool and yet it's clear to me
I don't have a strategy
It's just like taking candy from a baby,
And I think I must be
Under attack, I'm being taken
About to crack, defences breaking
Won't somebody please have a heart
Come and rescue me now 'cause I'm falling apart
Under attack, I'm taking cover
He's on my track, my chasing lover
Thinking nothing can stop him now
Should I want to, I'm not sure I would know how
This is getting crazy, I should tell him so
Really let my anger show
Persuade him that the answer to his questions,
Is a definite no
(I'm kind of flattered I suppose)
Guess I'm kind of flattered but I'm scared as well
Something like a magic spell
I hardly dare to think of what could happen,
Where I'd be if I fell
Under attack, I'm being taken
About to crack, defences breaking
Won't somebody please have a heart
Come and rescue me now 'cause I'm falling apart
Under attack, I'm taking cover
He's on my track, my chasing lover
Thinking nothing can stop him now
Should I want to, I'm not sure I would know how
Under attack, I'm being taken
About to crack, defences breaking
Won't somebody please have a heart
Come and rescue me now 'cause I'm falling apart
Under attack, I'm taking cover
He's on my track, my chasing lover
Thinking nothing can stop him now
Should I want to, I'm not sure I would know how

Credits

Musicians: Drums: Ola Brunkert, (on *Soldiers*, *The Visitors*, *Cassandra* and *Under Attack* Per Lindvall). Percussion: Åke Sundqvist. Bass: Rutger Gunnarsson. Electric and acoustic guitars: Lasse Wellander (on *Under Attack* and *Cassandra* Janne Schaffer). Acoustic Guitars: Björn Ulvaeus. Keyboards and synthesizers: Benny Andersson. Flute and clarinet *I Let The Music Speak*: Jan Kling. Mandolins *One Of Us*: The Three Boys.

Produced by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus. Digitally recorded and mixed at Polar Music Studios, Stockholm. Engineered by Michael B. Tretow.

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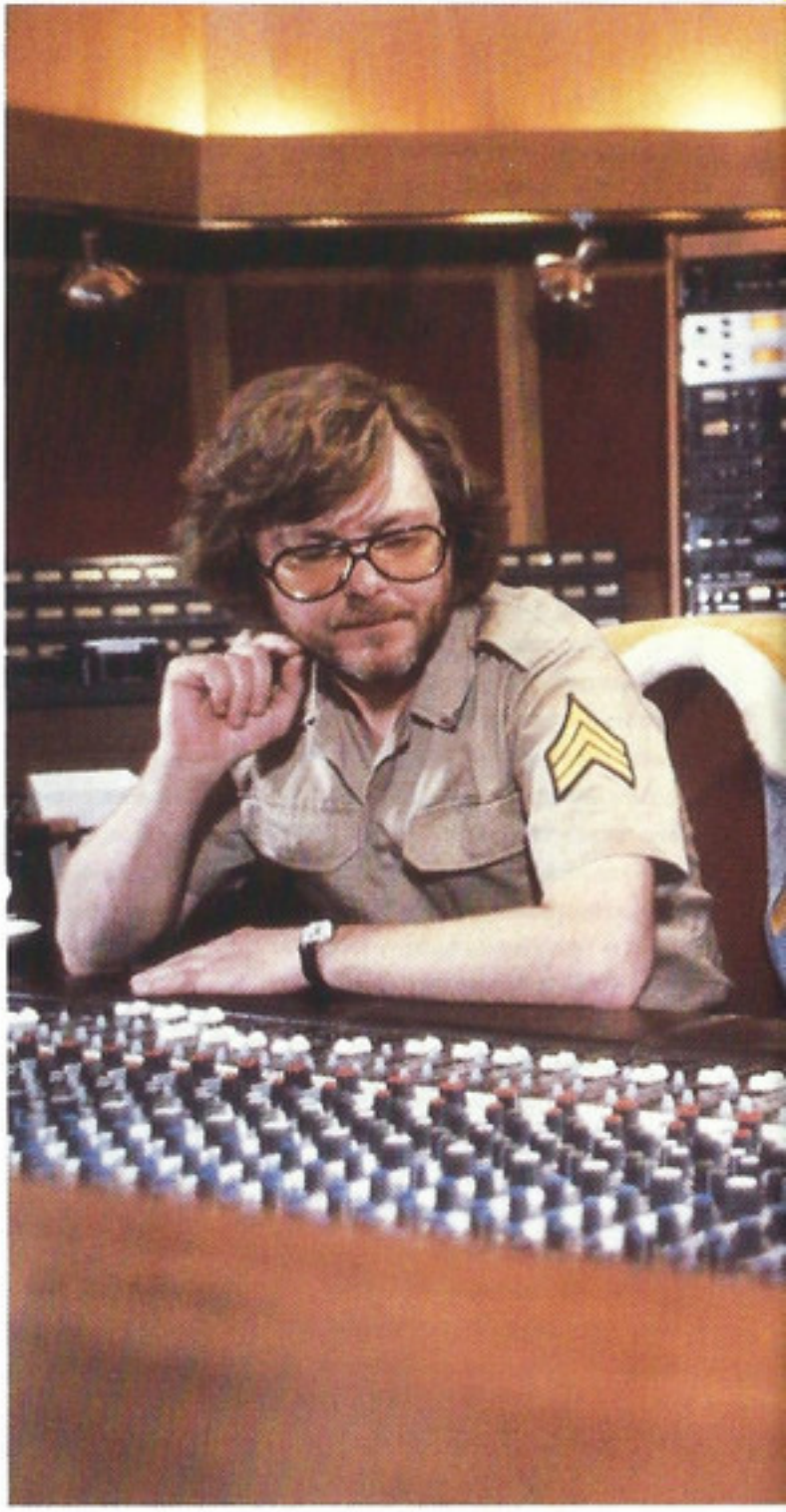

Björn and Benny with invaluable sound engineer, Michael B. Tretow.

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